26 November 2007

Congressman Jim Matheson Sent via Fax to: (202) 225-5638

1323 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515
Phone - (202) 225-3011

Dear Congressman Matheson:

I am writing as a follow-up to our meeting of some time ago. I want to thank you for taking time to meet with us and for agreeing to work with us on during our journey for justice.

I and other terminated members of the Mixed Blood Uintas of Utah and their descendants appreciate your genuine interest and dedication to working for fairness and justice for all the citizens of Utah, and I am grateful that you expressed your willingness to look further into the matter of the involuntary termination of our people.

I am now renewing my request for your support. At Senator Hatch's urging and encouragement, we have just recently requested that the BIA produce any and all official records connected to our termination under the enactment of the Ute Partition Act. As you are surely aware, there is likely to be a significant length of time involved in having the BIA research the prelude and outcome of the purported Ute tribe termination vote. Accompanying this letter is a copy of our BIA request; we ask that you join Senator Hatch in supporting our request by contacting the BIA directly on our behalf to emphasize the need for an expedited records search to facilitate determination of our actual status.

The need for us to gather official documents and records relative to the termination of my people comes as a result of having been told repeatedly – for over 50 years – that the "official record" shows we were legally and voluntarily terminated and that nothing can be done to change that outcome. Since I was a minor child at the time I was terminated, I was not privy to the events, agreements, and processes that surrounded

the severance of my membership in the Ute Tribe and the termination of my trust relationship with the federal government.

My experience is not unique; many of the terminated Mixed Blood members of the Tribe were minors who could not participate in the process and had no voice in the decision-making that altered our lives. By the time we reached adulthood, our termination was considered fait accompli and the records that accompanied the action were and have continued to be treated as incontrovertible and unassailable. If those records are, in fact, accurate and complete, then there is no harm in helping us gain access to them. A review would merely affirm that the events and activities surrounding our termination were legitimate, properly documented, and fully disclosed, and your assistance will have helped to put the matter to rest once and for all.

On the other hand, if a review reveals discrepancies, omissions, or errors in the record, particularly discrepancies, omissions, or errors that ultimately led to our involuntary termination, then you have will been instrumental in helping to reveal and correct a tremendous wrong against hundreds of members of your own constituency.

When last we spoke, you expressed an interest in knowing more of the details surrounding the date and nature of the vote to terminate our federal trust status. I invite you to visit our web site (*http://www.undeclaredutes.net/*) to review background information, status reports, individual biographies of some of the 490 illegally terminated members of our group, etc. Please also look at our veterans' page to see the stories of some of our people who have willingly fought to defend the United States of America in war time. Now the United States should be defending our veterans and helping them and their families.

In addition to reviewing our web site, I hope you have taken the time to examine the book I gave you, but if you have not yet done so, please pull out and read your copy of *Termination's Legacy: the Discarded Indians of Utah* (R. Warren Metcalf, University of Nebraska Press, 2002). Although it is brief, this scholarly and authoritative work provides detailed information about the specific events that led up to the implementation of the Ute Partition Act and the people involved in its design, creation, and implementation.

I must warn you, Congressman: the facts revealed in Professor Metcalf's book shows Utah's termination-era congressional and cultural leaders as people determined to carry out their agenda regardless of the potential of great harm to those affected. I personally think these people were acting out of a sincere but horribly misguided belief that termination was the best way of "helping the Indians to help themselves." Now that the truth has come to the surface – more than 50 years later – truth that shows exactly what happened to the Mixed Blood Uintas and why, it is easy to see why the local and national political and religious leaders felt and acted the way they did at that time. It is much more difficult to understand why only the Mixed Blood Uintas of Utah *remain* terminated. All other tribes terminated under this policy have been restored by legislation. Why were all these other tribes restored? Their restoration was just phase one of a continuing effort to halt and repair the extensive and continuing damage done by the ill-conceived termination policy. This damage has been repeatedly and thoroughly documented, and has had the effect of ultimately reversing the failed Federal termination policy to the extent that virtually all other terminated tribes have had their federal trust status reinstated. Do the Mixed Blood Uintas deserve anything less?

As a current leader in Congress, and as a champion of human rights and equal treatment under the law, I'm sure you see how shameful this is: the Mixed Blood Uintas were singled out as guinea pigs for a federal program that has since been absolutely repudiated, and now – although all other victims of this insidious experiment have had their status reinstated, the people who have suffered the longest under this horrible policy have yet to be restored to their former status. The Mixed Blood Uintas did not volunteer for termination. A number of us have requested reinstatement of our federal trust status, so far to no avail. All other tribes who were terminated have asked for – and been granted – restoration of their trust status. Why are we being singled out? Why are we still the only exception?

As one of the successors to the Utah Congressional delegation of the 1950s and 1960s, I know you must hate to see any members of your constituency suffering needlessly, especially when you have the power to help ease that suffering. When hundreds or thousands are suffering, it must be even more difficult for you to bear. With your help – particularly your ability to reach others who can make a difference – this suffering could end relatively quickly and the State and community leaders of Utah could reclaim their reputation of truly caring about everyone who calls Utah "home."

While it is impossible to bring back those who have died from disease and poverty as a result of their wrongful termination, it is still possible to right at least some of the wrongs. This would allow those who remain, as well as the children and grandchildren of the original 490, to regain a little of what was lost and move forward with the hope of being able to survive in the future. All that is required is for you to be willing to carefully and sincerely examine the record – the *entire* record (more than the record which is "officially on file" – more than just the record which some would like to believe is unassailable) to determine whether the facts everyone insists are so unequivocally, unquestionably true are, in fact, incontrovertible. Again, there would be no harm in asking the question. The only harm is in *not* questioning the "official" 54- year-old records only to learn generations later that those records were fabricated to cover up an elaborate fraud.

Our attorney, Dennis G. Chappabitty, will communicate with your staff in Washington, D.C. to schedule a meeting with you for the week of December 7 through 14. Mr. Chappabitty will be bringing you an update on the *Felter v. Kempthorne* civil action, as well as other information he would like to share with you about our journey for justice. We truly appreciate your willingness to work with us and with Dennis, and we are very grateful for your ongoing support of our efforts.

Thank you again for your kind interest and commitment to helping us sort out this devastating injustice. Your reputation of working for the betterment of Utah and all her people, especially her native people, will be even further enhanced by your efforts on our behalf.

Sincerely,

Oranna Bumgarner Felter

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